

# A report from your Legislature

## State Representative **Mike Sells**

### 2007 SESSION REVIEW

Summer 2007

Dear Fellow Citizen:

We accomplished quite a bit before the final gavel fell on this year's legislative session. Health care for more Washington children. Housing for more Washington families. Higher education for more Washington students. The 2007 legislative session was positive for Snohomish County and the state of Washington.

I'm honored to send this legislative report, and I hope you will contact me if you have questions or comments. Thank you very much for the great privilege of representing our region in the Legislature.

Sincerely,



**Mike Sells**

State Representative  
38th Legislative District



### State Representative **Mike Sells**

#### Committee assignments:

- Higher Education, Vice Chair
- Transportation
- Capital Budget

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### ◆ College: Branch campus means a better chance at higher education

A growing number of 21st century jobs will demand a good level of postsecondary training, whether it involves vocational-technical skills, or math and science education, or some other up-to-date schooling in technology. Citizens of all ages need access to training and education beyond high school.



*It's more important than ever that our students receive solid instruction and training in math and the sciences.*

"Access" is the key word. As I've said so often over the years, our area is grossly underserved in terms of higher education. In the western United States, we're the most populous region that doesn't have its own four-year

university. **Everett Community College is one of the best schools around, but they can't do it all.**

It was a great victory in Olympia to win support for a University of Washington branch campus for Snohomish, Island and Skagit counties.

Our branch campus, with the location as yet undetermined, might open as early as the fall of 2008. Having the UW's name in our area will be a huge boost in recruiting top professors for the high demand fields that absolutely must be emphasized in our new campus.

### ◆ Good economic sense, too ◆

Besides answering the needs of our region, it simply makes good economic sense to capitalize on the name recognition and tradition of one of the largest research universities in the nation. The partnerships that the University of Washington has developed with cutting-edge businesses will go a long way toward providing technical degrees, research and job training.

In the year 2025, just 18 years from now, when the kids born this year are entering college, our region will be 40 percent larger than it is today. We need to provide far more opportunities for upper-division college education and training.

**Our branch campus will focus on science, technology and engineering; areas where jobs will continue to demand more and more from successful applicants.**

This year, working with leadership in the Legislature and our governor, we will provide new higher education opportunities through the branch campus, as well as funding for 9,700 more higher education slots statewide.

### ◆ Housing: This new policy will help homeless citizens and at-risk families

It was great this year to win support for more assistance for homeless families and families at-risk of becoming homeless. I worked with the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County to develop needed legislation. This new state law will provide a tax exemption for nonprofit housing developers who build affordable rental units.

We are addressing the critical need for more affordable housing in Snohomish County and elsewhere in our state.

We want to do everything we can to get families into a good home, and then help keep them there.

The Housing Consortium of Everett and

Snohomish County is committed to meeting low-income housing needs in our community. As the consortium works to build housing units as quickly as possible, they need the flexibility afforded in this new legislation.



*Many thousands of Washington citizens need the chance to achieve the American dream of home ownership.*

### ◆ Old law was a barrier ◆

Prior to this new state law, a property-tax exemption was provided for nonprofit developers of rental housing for very low-income households if the developers receive funding from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) or an affordable-housing levy.

But housing for low-income families is costly to develop and CTED funding is limited. Housing that could be financially viable with a property-tax exemption was not built because, under the former law, CTED funding was not available.

**The new law removes that barrier. Now, local governments can work with non-profits to develop low-income and transitional housing, and take advantage of property tax exemptions that will make a project viable.**

A nonprofit housing organization generally pieces together multiple public and private funding mechanisms to create a new housing project. A realistic property-tax exemption can mean the difference between a project moving forward or not.

Delays mean increasing costs as land and construction prices continue to spiral upward. Delays also mean families who are homeless or who are at-risk of becoming homeless because of high rents simply do not have a decent chance to move into an affordable home or keep the home they have.

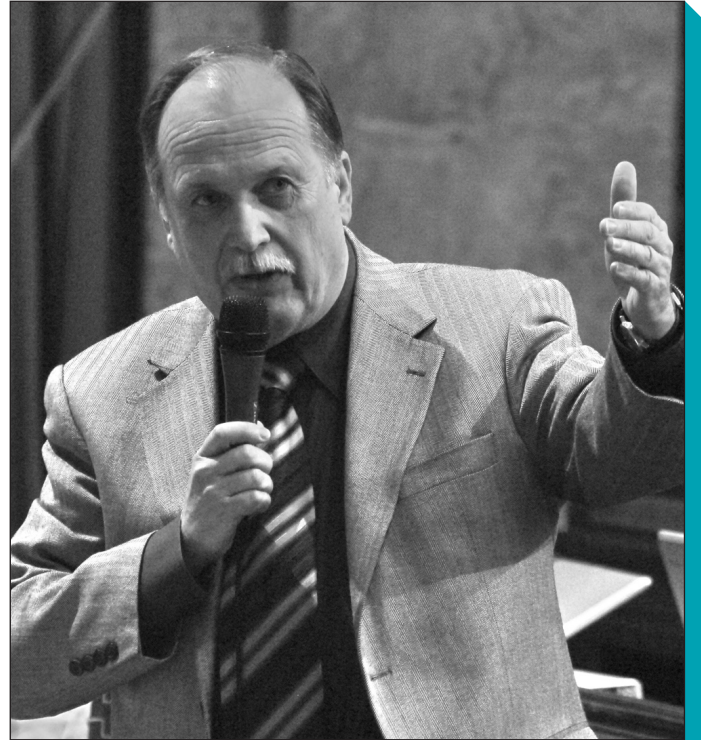
### ◆ Construction: Capital budget highlights schools, colleges and worker training

As a member of the Capital Budget Committee, I was proud to join in launching a new investment in our state's schools and colleges. I helped attain capital funding for needed local projects. Also, a new policy will be set up to boost our state's training programs through the use of apprentices in school district projects.

The Legislature approved more than \$800 million in spending for K-12 construction, including vocational skills centers, and more than \$1 billion in spending for colleges and universities, very much including community and vocational colleges. Capital funding is set aside for work at Everett Community College and the Sno-Isle Skills Center

The Housing Trust Fund is strengthened in the new capital budget, and we also bolstered our state's efforts for natural resources and public safety.

**Locally, capital funding is targeted toward needed work for the Dawson Place Child Advocacy Center, the Everett Senior Center, Everett Memorial Stadium (used**



***I was proud to help lead support for a strong K-12 and higher education budget.***

by the Everett School District and the AquaSox), heritage work on the Tulalip Reservation, and restoration of the Qwulooit Estuary.

### ◆ Apprenticeship training ◆

**Our state is facing a shortage of skilled workers in the building trades. By providing increased apprenticeship, we will help our citizens obtain the education for good family wage jobs.** Now, the dollars invested in school construction will also help train our work force.

Terms of new state policy approved this session direct that school building contracts going out for bid on or after January 2008, which cost \$3 million or more, must require that at least 10 percent of the construction hours be done by men and women who are enrolled in apprenticeship training programs.

Contracts after January 2009 for projects that cost \$2 million or more will have to use at least 12 percent apprentice labor. And contracts after January 2010 for projects that cost \$1 million or more will have to use at least 15 percent apprentice labor.

By providing increased access to various educational and training opportunities, which result in family wage jobs, we are helping to build and maintain a healthy local economy.



## ◆ **Bottom line:** Critical Snohomish County projects can now move forward

Also as a member of the Transportation Committee, I joined in supporting continued work on much-needed road, highway, bridge, and other infrastructure projects in our state and local transportation network.

Safety and congestion relief are the two main goals in this budget.

The largest ongoing transportation projects in our area include:

- ◆ HOV and interchange modifications for Interstate 5/164th Street Southwest to State Route 526.
- ◆ Widening and rebuilding ramps for the Interstate 5/41st Street interchange.
- ◆ Transit direct access for the Interstate 5/South Everett Freeway Station /112th Street Southeast.
- ◆ Additional HOV lanes for Interstate 5/State Route 526 to Marine View Drive.
- ◆ Replacement of the State Route 529/Ebey Slough bridge.

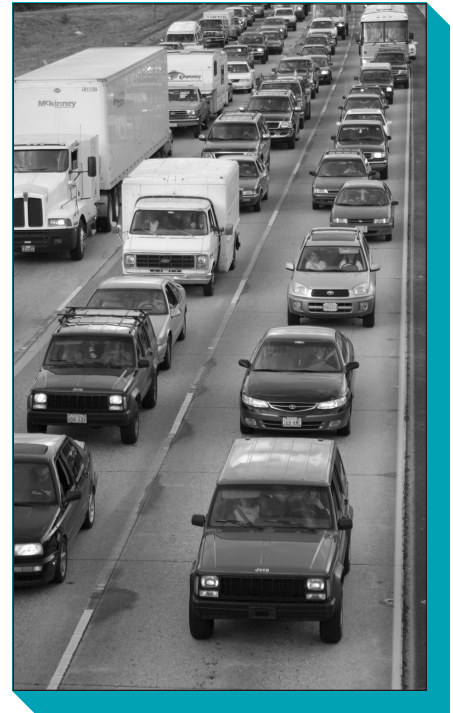
Statewide, the new transportation budget strengthens freight movement in terms of getting Washington goods and products to market and port.

Washington farmers and Washington manufacturers know very well that we're a "gateway state" – both for trading partners in Canada and other parts of the Pacific Rim and for other states.

We must never let our goods and products get bottled up in highway bottlenecks.

It's indisputable that hundreds of businesses and hundreds of thousands of jobs rest on the ability of our infrastructure to do its job.

The new budget and planning focus is aimed at cementing Washington's place as a leader in world trade.



*Stuck in traffic all day is what's ahead for thousands more motorists if we don't keep improving the pieces in our transportation infrastructure.*

**State Representative**  
**Mike Sells**

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